

**SUMMARY OF THE
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
December 18, 2000**

The Accrediting Authority Committee (Committee) of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Monday, December 18, 2000, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. John P. Anderson of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Division of Laboratories. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. The purpose of the meeting was to continue discussion of and follow-up on issues raised during the Committee's meeting in Las Vegas on October 31, 2000.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Anderson welcomed the Committee members to the teleconference. He noted that Mr. Paul Baker of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has been appointed to the Committee for the vacant term expiring in 2005. Mr. Baker's appointment came too late for him to arrange his schedule to participate in this meeting. The Committee looks forward to having him as a member.

Mr. Anderson then announced that he plans to retire from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency as of December 31, 2000. He commented on the fine working relationship the committee members have had over the years and expressed his appreciation for the hard work each committee member expended in helping to make service on the Committee both enjoyable and rewarding.

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

Dr. Flowers suggested that Mr. Louis Johnson of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality become the next chair of the Committee. Mr. Johnson expressed his willingness to serve, and was unanimously voted into office by all of the Committee members present.

SECONDARY ACCREDITING AUTHORITY DISCUSSION

The committee engaged in a wide-ranging discussion of the proposal presented by the Accrediting Authority Review Board (AARB) at the October 31, 2000, meeting suggesting that a formal process be developed for granting some form of NELAP recognition for accrediting authorities in states that are not primary accrediting authorities, and have no plans to become such. The Committee noted that any state, whether NELAP recognized or not, has the option to require that laboratory data submitted to it be from NELAP-accredited laboratories. In an effort to better understand the AARB's thinking on this issue, the Committee decided that a delegation from this Committee should meet with some members of the AARB. Mr. Johnson agreed to arrange a teleconference with members of the AARB to discuss this proposal in greater detail.

UNIFORMITY OF ON-SITE ASSESSMENTS

As was directed by the Committee at its October 31, 2000 meeting, the Committee heard a report from Mr. Johnson on the purpose and structure of a possible questionnaire to be circulated among accrediting authorities and laboratories. The primary purpose of this questionnaire is to determine the extent of alleged variances in the depth and quality of assessments experienced by laboratories seeking NELAP accreditation while going through the application-review/audit process. Another purpose of the questionnaire is to gather suggestions for correcting any deficiencies in the process if any are found to exist. After considerable discussion and review of some possible questions, the committee decided to appoint a sub-committee to draft the questionnaire. Mr. Johnson, Mr. Hoatson and Mr. Krisztian accepted this responsibility. All Committee members were asked to submit possible questions to the sub-committee by the end of the first week of January, 2001.

(Special note regarding the questionnaire: From comments at the NELAC Interim Meeting VII, it appears the AARB also is considering a questionnaire. If possible, all such questionnaires should be consolidated into a single document.)

As is noted in the minutes of the Committee's teleconference meeting held on September 13, 2000, the issue of assessment uniformity also was discussed at that meeting, and with the NELAP Director. These discussions led to the conclusion that one important step to help address the uniformity issue might be to develop a quality system with written procedures and a checklist for carrying out evaluations of applicant accrediting authorities. Therefore, in the September 13th meeting the Committee appointed a sub-committee to assist the NELAP Director in the development of a quality system and an associated management plan for carrying out application reviews and on-site visits of accrediting authorities seeking NELAP recognition. Mr. Johnson was asked to lead that endeavor. However, since he has agreed to serve as Chair of the entire Committee, the sub-committee membership was restructured to include only Dr. Flowers, Ms. Robinson and Ms. Mertens. The charge given to this sub-committee remains unchanged from that contained in the minutes of the September 13, 2000, meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The teleconference meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m. EST.

**ACTION ITEMS
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 31, 2000**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Develop questionnaire for determining main concerns about laboratory assessment uniformity issues	1/20/01
2.	Arrange a teleconference with representatives of the AARB and this Committee to discuss possible secondary recognition of accrediting authorities not holding status as primary accrediting authorities.	1/20/01
3.	Continue discussion of issues raised at October 31, 2000 Committee meeting	In process
4.	Develop conceptual proposal to address issues by NELAC VII	3/15/01

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ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 31, 2000

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